A SCALLOP SHELL OF QUIET

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A SCALLOP SHELL OF QUIET

IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

A SCALLOP SHELL OF QUIET

BY

CAROLINE HAZARD

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Give me my scallop shell of quiet,
My staff of faith to walk upon;
My scrip of joy, immortal diet;
My bottle of salvation;
My gown of glory, hope's true gage,
And thus I'll take my pilgrimage.

SIR WALTER RALEGH

PRELUDE

Ah, if I once could say just what I would,
All understood!
Could catch the thought that still eludes my might,
Hides out of sight;

Could speak by forms and models unconfined,
Pour my mind
Into the rapture of a wondrous speech
Angels teach.

Would it be frenzy, folly, merest madness,
Or sadness?
Would it be radiant beauty, glory, grace,
Love's own face?

Ah, to find and seize my inmost meaning,
No more gleaning
Scanty grain; to follow where my soul hath trod,
To seek God!

LENTEN SONNETS

I

ASH WEDNESDAY

How hard must be their lot, who do not dare
  To search their inmost heart with all their mind,
  Not knowing but if haply they may find
Some shape to bar the way, with horrid stare
To front them in its hidden recess there ;
  Who on the surface live, as if designed
  For only sunny days, and gayly wind
Small pleasures round them for their only care.
But fathom thou thy soul's remotest cell,
  And face each monster with the Truth for guide,
  And chase the spectres in thy heart that dwell ;
Nor to the faintest phantom give thou grace
  Until thou reach that utmost secret place
  Where, breathing love, thy Lord hangs crucified.

II

THE THRONE

And having found Him, what shall aught avail
To move thy steadfast mind? There is no ill;
Whate'er betides, it is His loving will, —
His will, and shall His courage ever fail?
And if the highest heaven thou wilt scale,
Lo, He is there; or look within, and still
His is the glory that thy soul doth fill,
God and thyself complete thy life's whole tale.
Then what great peace and what a noble shame
Should fill thy soul, for lo, it is thine own!
The Giver gave the gift, resigned all claim;
It is for thee to cleanse thy heart full well,
This lowly place where He vouchsafes to dwell,
To show His wondrous love, to build His throne.

III

PRAYER

My gracious Lord, I know not what to ask;
I would not come beseeching some one thing
Whose very granting might an anguish bring
I know not of; I would not dare to task
Omnipotence my small desires to mask
In glory, nor importunately cling
And strive to stay Thine angel's onward wing,
Nor would I idly in Thy presence bask.
But simply as Thy child I come and kneel,
To spread my soul in Thine effulgent light,
And tax my every sense to hear, to feel,
To see, to know, to open every door,
To be enlarged, to catch of Thine outpour
Of grace, of joy, of Thy transcendent might.

IV

PETITION

Lord, I do ask, and yet I know not how;
Lord, I do long, and know not yet for what;
It cannot be, my Lord, I have forgot
Some whisper of Thine own, once heard, and now
Lost in obscurity? I come and bow
My head and search in vain for what is not,—
The power to rise to Thee, the holy spot
Where Thou wilt stand revealed, and I may know.
Lord, change my asking, sublimate desire,
Breathe Thou again that blessed word of Thine,
Show me the dream, the ecstasy, the fire,
When earth is lost, and gates of heaven unroll
In perfect union of the soul with Soul,
In joy of prayer that melts in the divine.

V

JOY

We beg forgiveness in our lowly prayers.
We pray for shelter from all threatened harm,
For refuge from our haunting fears' alarm,
For comfort in a thousand daily cares,
And we forget that unto him who dares
To take God's grace, the penitential psalm
Must mingle with rejoicing, for with calm
And holy joy upon his way he fares.
Break forth in singing, O my gladsome soul!
His precious mercies gratefully recount;
Told o'er and o'er thou canst not tell the whole.
The world is full of love from sea to sea,
That penetrates and shines with might on thee
As did His face upon the holy mount.

VI

THE SEA OF GALILEE

Sweet waters, whose serene and limpid wave
Upheld the pulpit from which words were said
To outlast time; on whose banks feasts were spread
Which to the soul an unknown vigor gave—
Ye did obey, when storms began to rave,
The "Peace, be still," and each foam-crested head
Became like solid oak beneath that tread
Which bore embodied love, and power to save.
The mountains mirror their fair heights in thee;
Upon their slopes His blessed footsteps trod
Whom multitudes went to the wilds to see,
And to be fed with bread come down from heaven.
From thee went out the Spirit's mighty leaven,
For here was manifest the Son of God.

VII

SACRIFICE

I SAID, a sacrifice I will prepare
Unto my God, some perfect spotless thing,
A firstling of my flock for offering,
A tender turtle-dove, all white and fair.
Alas, how fruitless is my anxious care;
My flock has no unblemished lamb to bring,
My long-sought gentle dove with broken wing
In vain endeavor beats the troubled air.
Since naught I do — as is most evident —
Is perfect, since my fairest things of price
All fail in execution or intent;
Let me make offering of the humbled will,
Which gives up doing, and would just be still,
Itself the sacrifice of sacrifice.

VIII

TUMULT

LORD, I would bring the whole of life to Thee, —
Not only its external outward show,
But all its springs, its ceaseless ebb and flow
Of seething thought, the rising of the sea
Of hopes and fears; the solemn choices free
Begetting action; secret seeds which sow
The fertile fields from which my harvests grow:
These would I bring in all humility.
And far beyond these I would strive to bring
The horde of troubled and unquiet ghosts
Of bygone days, which flit on bat-like wing,
Of murdered love, and oft-wept griefs which surge,
A cruel phantom crowd, with scorpion scourge
Thine hand alone can stay, O Lord of Hosts.

IX

PEACE

WHICH passeth understanding, St. Paul said, —
The peace of God, that comes the heart to fill,
The white dove brooding o'er subsiding ill,
Which rests serenely pure upon the dead;
The crown of olive on the victor's head,
The consummation of the struggling will,
The hush that followed on the "Peace, be still,"
When silence on the raging waters spread.
Yet what the mind alone can never grasp
The spirit feels; it stills all vague alarms
When mortal weakness reaches up to clasp
Divine serenity, secure repose,
Majestic calm, the healing of all woes,
Enfolded in the Everlasting Arms.

X

THANKSGIVING

LORD, Thou dost know; I cannot know the ways
In which Thy love my flickering life doth lead;
I cannot know the profit and the need
Of what would seem disaster and delays.
But I would have the current of my days
Run clear and strong, from springs which Thou dost feed,
A life flood which Thy mercy deigns to heed,
And with heart-beats "whose pulse shall be Thy praise."
For grief and joy Thy love doth sublimate
To blend into a harmony divine;
And heavy sorrow joy doth recreate
In nobler fashion, adding depths unknown
And vibrant heights which lead up to Thy throne,
Whence streaming forth the lights celestial shine.

XI

TRIBUTE

In ancient times men brought their sovereign lord
The hardly gathered tribute, year by year
Extorted by oppression and by fear.
The frightened serf in secret tried to hoard
Some scanty sheaf to dress his frugal board;
But when the sum was paid, then he was clear
Until the taxer should again appear;
Then could he joy in all that he had stored.
So wish I not to deal with Thee, my King,
To give Thee all Thy due what soul may claim?
Some stated tribute will I gladly bring,
But better Thou must have Thy holy share
In all, my work or study, rest or care,
Till all of life is tribute to Thy name.

XII

SEED-TIME

A LIVING green has touched the swelling hills,
And tiny birds chirp in the leafless trees;
Up from the ocean comes a vernal breeze
That brings the showers to feed the mountain rills.
In dark red soil the steady ploughman drills
The long deep furrows, sinking to his knees
In spongy earth; it is no time of ease,—
With signs of birth and promise Nature thrills.
Drive Thou Thy plough, O Lord, deep in my heart,
Hardened beneath a load of petty cares;
Break up its guilty crust, and freely start
The showers of Thy grace; then sow some seed
Whose ripened harvest Thou wilt deign to heed,
And husband it with gracious heavenly airs.

XIII

RENUNCIATION

THY ways have made me trust myself, dear Lord,
And all I am, completely in Thy hands;
I can but be as Thy great will commands;
In comfort, or in sickness, health restored
Of mind and body, rich or scanty board,
Living or dying, still Thy tender bands
Bind me to Thee, in these or unknown lands,
For I am Thine, what more can life afford?
Then let me trust my dear ones unto Thee.
If dear to me, to Thee how much more dear?
If for their good seek I, who cannot see,
How much more Thou, with love and power untold;
Myself I give Thee, — small the gift; — grown bold,
I give Thee those I love, without a fear.

XIV

SINCERITY

O THAT I could make true each word I say!
That every action, every lightest thought,
That all I do in Thy dear love be wrought;
That not a moment of a single day
From consciousness of Thee I turn away,
Thy presence seeking as the sun is sought,
For light, for warmth, for growth; then truly naught
Would grieve, but loss of that inspiring ray.
So should my life be service and true song,
In blended harmony the two should mate.
No work, no effort, could be counted long;
For each is done, or lived, or borne for Thee:
And if Thou shouldst accept that work from me,
Then naught could be too little, or too great.

XV

THE DAYSPRING

The eastern sky is flushed with gleams of gold
And gorgeous tints of crimson and of red;
The sea reflects the light from overhead,
And like a sheet of silver lies unrolled.
The day draws near on noiseless wings. Behold
The mighty change, the rising from the dead
Of night and dreams. Now is the darkness fled,
And day with warmth and light dispels the cold.
The morning miracle! So when He came
Who is the light to lighten all the earth,
The Dayspring from on High was called His name,
The source of love, the fount of life and light,
Whose tender mercy came to chase our night,
To give the day within our hearts its birth.

XVI

"IF GOD SO CLOTHE THE GRASS"

He must have known this lily of the field
In all the glory of its crimson dress;
This purple iris in its loveliness,
This cyclamen, — its leaves a silver shield, —
This mignonette, this orchid, all appealed
In beauty to Him, each was an express
Image of joy, which mutely did confess
His care, Who in the grass His love revealed.
And when upon the hills of Galilee
He spent the watches of the night in prayer,
When solemn stars in silence looked to see
The conflict of the wide world in one soul,
True man, true God, Who should redeem the whole,
With dawn adoring flowers were also there.

XVII

THE NAME

I WOULD not know Thee as the Good Supreme,
Or as an overruling Providence,
Or name Thee by a name which shows my sense
Of Thine infinitude, and which must seem
To mark my distance. In the turbid stream
Of sharp affliction such ideas immense
Elude my grasp, and give a vain pretense
Of help and succor, idle as a dream.
But breathe Thy Name upon my waiting soul,
And come Thyself to me, transcendent Guest;
Then naught I fear, whatever storms may roll.
Then shall I be the sparrow in Thine hand
To rise or fall alike at Thy command;
Then shall I find in Thee my perfect rest.

XVIII

TRUTH

The tiny hands with all their baby might
Stretch joyously to grasp the rolling ball;
Too large for their small hold they let it fall
And roll it now to left, and now to right,
Still reaching after, with renewed delight,
At each rebound from the enclosing wall,
With growing courage nothing can appall,
Still eager for the thing so full in sight.
So we, with infant hands that cannot hold
The rounded truth, reach out and gladly say
We have it surely, here is truth's pure gold;
When we just touch the outer rim, and so
But send it onward, farther from us; lo!
Full orbed it rolls upon its heavenly way.

XIX

"LIFT THINE EYES"

Most noble hills and mountains darkly blue
Stretch round and shelter me with loving care.
Upon their slopes they stately live-oaks bear
And orchards flushed with tender rosy hue,
Where streams cut rugged cañons sharply through;
Yet I, who all their bounties gladly share
Of shelter, shade, and fruit, — the love I bear
Is for their beauty, not for what they do.
So from the hills mine eyes I upward lift,
Not for Thy gifts, Thy care, let me adore,
Not even for Thy love, divinest gift,
But for Thyself, the Perfect Holy One,
E'en to my sight a dazzling radiant sun
Whom growing vision shall love more and more.

XX

THE MEASURE

Thou who hast given so much, my dearest Lord,
  Send me some sure angelic rod to mete
  The blessings with which life is so replete,
The countless mercies which Thou hast outpoured,
The joys with which my memory is stored,
  The beauty I can see, the cadence sweet
  The inner ear can hear, the good complete
Of sense and soul which this world doth afford.
Yet like a child who prates of being tall,
  I count my blessings o'er; I say I see,
  Who just perceive that beauty hides in thrall;
I say I love; dear Lord, forgive the boast;
  Love's flood-gates open wide, and quench my ghost
  Of nothingness in Thine Infinity.

XXI

COMPLETION

If I would bring a gift to some dear friend,
And find it broken, nor by any pain
Could set it forth, and make it whole again,
How great my shame to give it him to mend!
Yet so do I to Thee; for I expend
My power and effort, but 't is all in vain;
It is Thy touch must free the gift from stain,
It is Thyself must all the glory lend.
Deign then my humble offering to complete,
And make it all Thine own, and gently lift
Me to the radiance of Thy Mercy-seat.
My life, and all the things which I call mine,
I fain would bring to Thee, to make them Thine;
Complete the offering, Giver of the gift.

XXII

NAZARETH

In Nazareth, upon its southern slope
Of springtime hillside, lying in the sun
With fresh grass from the winter hardly won
And blossoms that begin with joy to ope —
The lily of the field, in heliotrope
And splendid crimson, such as Solomon
In glory had not — the Angelic One
Brought all to life, with those great words of hope.
And from the crest of that fair mountain town
Far to the north, the height the Prophet sings,
The dome of dazzling snow, the country's crown,
The splendid majesty of Hermon lies,
The joy of His forefather David's eyes
White as the herald angel's radiant wings.

XXIII

ANNUNCIATION

In vernal days the wingèd angel came
With lowly salutation to the maid,
And found her calm and strong and unafraid,
Content to know the thing she could not name,
Lighting within her breast that holy flame
Which lights the world, for which the world had prayed.
Behold the handmaid of the Lord, she said,
And had no thought of honor, or of fame.
So to each one the secret messenger
Comes silently, unsought, to bring God's word,
A word creative as he brought to her.
And each conceives a truth scarce understood;
Thrice blest that soul which in the Virgin's mood
Can say, Behold the handmaid of the Lord.

XXIV

CAPERNAUM

I stood among the heaps of broken stones
Once capital and pillar, on the floor
Of the centurion's synagogue; the door
Through which the Master and His chosen ones
Must oft have passed is here; and here the groans
Of sick folk sounded, as diseased and sore
Men brought them to the street to lay before
That blessed Presence, who could still all moans.
This was His home, the blue lake's diadem,
Here was the ruler's daughter raised, here came
The woman who but touched His garment's hem.
Now desolation reigns; the sun beats down
Upon the remnants of that ancient town
Which lives but in the glory of His name.

XXV

THE SUN

A SPLENDOR falls upon the softened ground,
A tender radiance fills the lambent air;
It bathes the trees, and flower faces fair,
And brings a balm for every wintry wound;
It lends enchantment to each springtime sound, —
The sea basks in its smile, and mountains bare
Are clothed in purple glory, for like prayer
That follows praise the sun sheds peace profound.
Thou greater Sun, from Whose surpassing lights
This radiance and this glory overflow,
I rise to Thee, and to supernal heights,
To bathe my soul in Thine infinitude
To lose myself in Thine all-perfect good,
And in Thy light to breathe, and live, and grow.

XXVI

THE VOICE

O Voice Divine which I have sometimes heard
  Cleaving through darkness and the troubled night,
  Ring in my ears, break with Thy trenchant might
The slumber of my soul. Speak Thy great word!
Not bread, not bread I ask, but to be stirred
  With that supremest sound which heard aright
  Means consciousness, security, and sight,—
A present heaven, not a hope deferred.
Too much to ask? Thou givest daily bread;
  Give then this word by which men daily live;
  Attune these ears, unseal these eyes of lead
To hear, to see, in inmost depths to feel
  The word Thou dost to each true soul reveal;
  With Thine own voice to me the message give.

XXVII

THE JORDAN

THIS is the mystic place, this turbid stream
Swift flowing toward the Salt Sea of the Plain
Between its banks of rushes and of cane,
This is the river of the Prophet's dream.
From Pisgah's lofty heights he saw its gleam
When with his eager dying eyes astrain
He looked upon the promised land in vain,
And this flood marked its eastern verge extreme.
And more, for here was the forerunner sent,
The voice from out the wilderness, Prepare,
Make straight a highway for our God, repent!
And here He came; and baptism being ended,
The heavens opened, and the dove descended.
O humble stream, canst thou such glory bear?

XXVIII

THE WILDERNESS

Up from the Jordan straight His way He took
To that lone wilderness, where rocks are hurled
And strewn, and piled,— as if the ancient world
In strong convulsion seethed, and writhed, and shook,
Which heaved the valleys up, and sunk each brook,
And flung the molten rock like ribbons curled
In twists of gray around the mountains whirled,—
A grim land, of a fierce, forbidding look.
The wild beasts haunt its barren stony heights,
And wilder visions came to tempt him there;
For forty days and forty weary nights
Alone He faced His mortal self and sin,
Chaos without, and chaos reigned within,
Subdued and conquered by the might of prayer.

XXIX

JERICHO

This plain made bright with streaks of crimson clay
And sprinkled o'er with grains of golden sand—
The vestage of a long-forgotten strand—
Once saw the host of Israel as it lay
With pikes and trumpets in war's fierce array.
Now in the grass the solemn wild storks stand,
A pensive silence broods upon the land,
Unbroken by the shout which won that day.
Zacchæus lived here, who desired to see
When Christ came down the Jordan wilderness,
And one born blind cried out exceedingly.
I too am blind, my Lord; oh, give me sight,
Illume my mind, Thou very Light of Light,
I cannot let Thee go, until Thou bless.

XXX

REVELATION

"ACQUAINT thyself with Him, and be at peace,"
So cried Thy servant in his sore distress,
So every strong endeavor doth confess,—
The effort of the masters without cease,
The germ of beauty seeking glad release,
The transient clothed in an eternal dress,
Dumb aspiration striving to express
The passing time of earth, by heaven's increase.
Lift up the veils, O Lord, that hide Thy face!
The eager eyes would see Thee as Thou art,
Transcendent beauty, and benignant grace.
My longing soul comes to Thee to be stilled,
My finite in Thine Infinite fulfilled,
Come, blessed Lord! I offer Thee my heart!

XXXI

LIGHT

Celestial Light, eternal, ever young,
Which dawns with hope my waiting eyes to bless,
Which clothes the mountains in a royal dress
Spun from the arch that o'er the heavens hung
When the new-watered world from chaos sprung,
Still dost thou glow, thy wonder grows not less,
Transmuting dross to gold; thou dost express
Pure joy, as when the sons of morning sung.
The jewel holds thy secret; not alone
The regions vast of heaven's stupendous dome
Dost thou inhabit; in small space is shown
Thy majesty, Revealer, Healer, Friend,
Effulgence from the Light of Lights, Thou End,
Our being's strong endeavor, and our home.

XXXII

DARKNESS

LORD, what a wonder hast Thou made our eyes,
To see in light, to be in darkness blind,
Yet seeking still, if haply they may find
Some ray of hope, some star of far surmise
Low hanging in the distant hidden skies,
To point the path, to leave the dark behind,
To show the good, to cheer the troubled mind,
To open up new ways of high emprise.
And yet the dark hides all. Not only fear
And dread, not only deeds of sin and hate,
But utmost love is shrouded in its sphere,
And utmost help and succor in it veiled,
Since those three awful hours when sunlight failed,
Nor perfect Love the dark could dissipate.

XXXIII

THE CUP

LORD, Thou dost hold the cup with Thine own hand,
And in the cup a vintage rare I find;
The sweet and bitter subtly are combined
And intermixed; — as in a silken band
The thread of joy shows a pure scarlet strand,
And purple shadows are about it twined, —
So in this mystery Thou hast designed
This draught of life, which Thou for me hast planned.
Ah, Lord, I come with trembling lips, which shrink
From all the sadness, all the bitter pain,
This vinegar and gall that I must drink:
And yet I know that my soul's secret love
Is measured by the agony I prove,
And so I bow my head to drink again.

XXXIV

THE ENTRY

With branches of the palm, and leaves of spring,
With hymns, and garments in the roadway spread,
The people called down blessings on His head
Who now the city gates was entering;
And should these cease triumphant songs to sing
The very stones would lift their voice, He said
As He rode lowly on the ass they led,
Rode lowly, coming to his own, their King.
So with the seasons' swift return; each year
The new leaves wave with joy, the forests raise
Their high hosannas sounding sweet and clear.
To thee He comes, and art thou dumb, oh heart?
In all the gladness canst thou take no part?
Fling wide thy gates, and welcome Him with praise.

XXXV

THE GARDEN

If it is true, and surely it is true,
That each soul to the measure of its love
Must taste of darkness, for itself must prove
Despair, and drink the cup of myrrh and rue,
What must have been the sorrow that pierced through
The heart of Jesus? depths we know not of
Were sounded by that Soul all souls above,
For utmost love the utmost anguish knew.
We humbly bow the head in holy awe
And worship; nor may fully comprehend
The strange mysterious workings of the law
Of Blessedness and Grief. Enough for us
Christ fathomed it that night, and proved it thus,
And trod the bitter pathway to the end.

XXXVI

GETHSEMANE

THIS olive tree, so gnarled but living yet,
Perchance was witness of that dreadful hour
Which tempted flesh and soul with awful power.
Here was the agony and bloody sweat;
This sheltered Him, when hosts of evil met.
Beneath now blooms a small pure white cross-flower;
Above it pours the sun a golden shower;
It holds its secret, and can ne'er forget.
A little garden, but a sacred place,
Of all the world most holy blessed one.
Thy Master's trial and His conquering grace
Availed not only for Himself. His heart
For thee was bruised to show thee who thou art.
Father, He prayed, Thy will, not mine, be done.

XXXVII

GOLGOTHA

WITHOUT the city, just beyond the gate,
Set among hills, there is a domelike rise,
A rock with a sheer precipice; two eyes
Made by two caverns coldly stare, a straight
Line in the broken surface forms a great
And gaping mouth; above a crevice lies
A hole for nostrils, all a face implies,
Place of the Skull, a hill most desolate.
And here they brought Him, here He tasted all
Of human agony; the Roman host
Did its dread work, the vinegar and gall
Were offered, and those hands which moved to bless
Were nailed; here in His utter helplessness
My God, He cried, and yielded up the ghost.

XXXVIII

THE NINTH HOUR

After the shameful trial in the hall,
The mocking and the scourging, and the pain
Of Peter's words; to Herod, and again
To Pilate's judgment-seat, the royal pall,
The cross itself, the vinegar and gall;
The thieves close by, discipleship proved vain,
The scoffing crowd, His mother's tears like rain,
There came one moment, bitterest of all.
Yet in that cry, when flesh and spirit failed,
Last effort of the awful way He trod,
Which shook the earth, nor left the temple veiled,
In that exceeding great and bitter cry
Was conquest. The centurion standing by
Said, Truly this man was the Son of God.

XXXIX

MARTHA

CHRIST said to Martha by her brother's grave,
I am the resurrection and the life —
And with what troubled thoughts her mind was
rife!
The life, He said, and yet He freely gave
His life, and saving others would not save
Himself. The Resurrection? Chuza's wife
Had seen Him in the tomb — at end was strife,
And o'er her anguish swept, a mighty wave.
And yet that firm assurance kept her faith,
And her reply, the fervent I believe, —
Had not His voice raised Lazarus from death,
Had not the grave released its four days' prey?
A foretaste of the resurrection day
She had to bid her wait, and not to grieve.

XL

"VERY EARLY IN THE MORNING"

O JOYFUL morn, whose faintest dawn of day
  Beheld what mortal eyes may never see,
  The rising from the dead, the victory
Conceived but dimly in the prophet's lay.
Behold the place, the shining angels say
  Unto the women coming tearfully
  With precious spices for their ministry
And questioning who should roll the stone away.
And there were but the garments in the tomb!
  The Life was living, and made manifest
  One life continuous. The fear, the gloom
Were banished on that resurrection morn;
  We but lie down in faith and are new born,
  For Life, unending Life, is death's great quest.

INTERLUDE

THE CLOSE OF THE YEAR

THE days are short, O Time, I said;
The hours move fast, — give me a few,
A brief space ere the days are fled
Give me, for I have work to do.

I have a good and noble work,
My Father's work; to it shall bend
My mind and heart; I will not shirk
If thou the precious hours wilt lend.

But Time moved on, relentless still;
The work is all thy Father's, child, —
The time is His, for good or ill, —
Take what thou canst, nor be beguiled.

If thou wouldst choose, and pick thy days,
And say, lo, here to work I come,

Thou seekest but thyself to praise —
  Who needs thee in God's harvest home?

Take, then, the moments that I give
  At morn, or noon, or evening dim,
Rejoicing that while thou dost live
  Thy Father lets thee work for Him.

VIA VITAE

I HAD a message from the Lord:
He bade me rise and seek His face,
He set me in a shady road
That bloomed with beauty and with grace.

I wandered on from flower to flower, —
I breathed their perfume with delight;
How sweetly passed each sunny hour,
How full of beauty every sight!

Till almost I forgot that I
Was but a traveler on the road, —
The vale so fair, so blue the sky,
It seemed it must be my abode.

Then colder grew the azure sky,
The night came down, the flowers were gone,
A voice spoke to me from on high, —
Thou foolish child, press on, press on.

NEW YEAR'S HYMN

Oh, forward, forward turn thy gaze,
Lift up thine eyes and see;
The New Year brings untrodden ways;
Thy God shall walk with thee.

Cast not a pensive look behind
To count thy sorrows o'er;
The New Year comes, and will unbind
Of joys and griefs its store.

Put off thy garments soiled and worn,
Put off affliction's bands;
And clothe thyself for New Year's morn
In raiment from God's hands.

The raiment of His Righteousness
Thy God for thee prepares;

This New Year claim thy blessedness
And cast on Him thy cares.

And forward, forward turn thy gaze,
Lift up thine eyes and see;
The New Year brings untrodden ways;
Thy God shall walk with thee.

A SPRINGTIME HYMN

The radiant sun, with wondrous might
Holds all creation with its light,
Uprears each flower, each grassy blade,
Each giant tree of forest shade,
Suffuses them with light and heat,
Gives colors rare, and odors sweet.

Thou greater Sun of Righteousness
Who deign'st my humble life to bless,
Upholding me with matchless power,
Unfolding me from hour to hour,
Still draw me upward by Thy might,
Still bathe me in Thy holy light.

RENEWAL

Worn and weary, far behind
I left the town awhile,
Once more o'er Nature's face to find
A gracious Father's smile.

The sadness that was then my share
To me doth still belong;
I took it with me, as a prayer,
I brought it back — a song.

SILENCE

How prone we are to pour complaints
  Into the listening Father's ear!
The weary soul that almost faints
  Still finds expression of each fear.

But when joy comes to be our guest,
  And soul and heart and mind rejoice,
The words deep hidden in the breast
  In silence find their truest voice.

VISION

Look without and find God,
  Look within, He is here.
What matters the road?
  I am of good cheer, —
  What is there to fear?

He above, I below!
  And the infinite bond
Shall hold me, I know,
  Both here and beyond,
  Both here and beyond.

ASSURANCE

Sad heart, no more complain,
  But learn and be content.
Thou canst not be at strife
  Nor all thy blessings spent,
Since Life is Love, and Love is Life.

Rejoice, nor gaze in vain.
  The deep look in the heart
Profoundest joy must move, —
  Grief is Love's counterpart,
And Love is Life and Life is Love.

TIME

We measure life with our short span of years,
And count the flying moments, hours, and days;
Turn back on past delights a mournful gaze,
Perplex the future with a thousand fears;
Chide Time, who all the happy past endears,
And bid him stay his course to suit our ways,
Not knowing that his flight demands our praise,
Or how "shall be" exceeds "what now appears."
For Time leads onward to immortal day,
To which the changes serve us as a guide,
For Time brings changes, so the poets say.
Then welcome change, — I am no longer loath
To bid the years farewell, for Time is growth,
Growth till I wake, and shall be satisfied.

THY NEIGHBOR

Give of thy best to all; nor yet demand
That thou receive a full return in kind.
Face answereth to face, and mind to mind
E'en when dull reason cannot understand,
For we are brothers banded in one band.
Pure truth in thee its counterpart will find
Unlike itself, that both may be combined
And, fused together, toward the Truth expand.
Thy spark of life is part of the great whole —
Fill then thy niche, shine with the light thou hast,
The light which comes to all, from one great sun.
So shalt thou strengthen best thy brother's soul,
So shalt thine own soul bloom, till thou at last
Rejoice where light, and love, and life are one.

TERROR

Scourged by some dread or some portentous fear
Out from ourselves and our accustomed ease,
How phantom-like the world becomes! The trees,
So living once, but a vain show appear.
The solid earth and all that we hold dear,
The hues and forms and all the sights that please,
The ways we walk, become the hum of bees,
Uncertain, drowsy, vague, where all was clear.
Then in this moment, when in chaos falls
The fabric of an ordered, sheltered life,
The soul emerges, breaks its prison walls.
Great God, what is this Thing which stands alone
In all the universe, unseen, unknown,
And dumbly gazes toward Thee through the strife!

ROME

Upon my fingers I can count the days
Since I was in the country of His birth,
With bare red hills, and olive trees whose girth
Of twisted trunk cause wonder and amaze;
A simple land, still keeping ancient ways.
But mosque and minaret abound; His worth
Who came to bring good-will and peace on earth
Is oft derided, and His reign delays.
Here is the cross triumphant, church and tower
Bedeck each hill; from here the papal ban
On unbelievers claims supernal power.
But from this worship my thought gladly flies
To those Judæan hills 'neath Syrian skies,
Where worn and footsore walked the Son of Man.

DUALITY

How is it that the eager mind delights
In paradoxes? State an obvious fact,
And straight the contrary seems true; there lacked
Its full completion. Not alone do nights
Devour time, but days; the earth has heights
Of mountains and has plains; no separate act
Is wholly good, or bad, for it is packed
With motives mixed, and good with evil fights.
True man, true God, we say, and bow the head,—
He trod those Galilean hills in youth;
As Love embodied He broke living bread.
Does God then walk the earth, and blessings give?
And can man say, "Because I live, ye live"?
This Holy One alone combines all truth.

"OUT OF EGYPT HAVE I CALLED MY SON"

THE mighty river flows as when Thine eyes,
Thy baby eyes, in wonder saw it flow.
The Pyramids stand there; no one may know
Their countless years, or ancient builders wise;
Thy childish gaze was caught in glad surprise
To see the haughty camels come and go;
The ass thy mother rode still ambles slow,
Unmoved by centuries the country lies.
Up from the calm, the peace, the mystic land,
Back to the scene of conflict and of strife,
Thy parents journeyed at the Lord's command.
A touch of glory rests upon the place
Which gave its shelter to Thine infant grace,
And nourished Thee to be the Life of Life.

REFUGE

Build thee, my soul, a safe and sure retreat
From all vexations, and from babbling men
Who vainly strive, and go, and come again
In the fierce conflict of the busy street.
Fly back, and to thyself once more repeat
What thou with joy hast seen. Remember when
That distant land unfolded to thy ken,
And thou didst walk where trod His blessed feet.
The mountains that He knew stand there secure,
And swelling hills, which gave Him glad release
From toilsome days; the living fountains pure
From which He drank still flow; once more I see
The limpid waters of Lake Galilee,
And to my tempests His clear voice says, Peace.

A CYCLE OF GRIEF

M. W. B. T.

"Siehe, da weinen die Götter, es weinen die Göttinnen alle
Dass das Schöne vergeht, dass das Vollkommene stirbt."

Schiller

(Lo, the gods all are weeping, are weeping the goddesses also,
That the beautiful passes, that the perfected must die.)

I

COLD

A BITTER day, with icy breath, and chill,—
Low in the sky the bright sun blankly stares;
To leave the cottage roof the smoke scarce dares;
And chained to silence is the frozen rill.
Benumbing quiet reigns supreme, and still
The oak its mighty arms to heaven bares,
Mute with the anguish of unanswered prayers,
And like a pall, the cold shrouds vale and hill.
Thou too, poor heart, ice-bound in sorrow's bands,
Art dumb with all the anguish of thy pain;
This numbing cold descendeth from God's hands,
A mantle to enfold thee with thy dead,
And when the stony-hearted day has fled,
With night the healing tears shall fall like rain.

II

SUBMISSION

Not in defiance grim or tearful wail
I raise my voice; nor vex with questions vain
The Wisdom that ordains the heavy strain
Of loss and grief. I would not pierce the vail
That shrouds His ways, or could my prayers prevail
To win her back to her loved home again,
I would not dare to pray, lest in her pain
Of losing heaven, all happiness should fail.
But oh, I miss her, long to see her face,
My earthly love, transplanted to the skies;
I long once more to feel her soft embrace,
To feel the tender pressure of her hand.
My heart is dumb, and cannot understand,
And still I look for her, with weary eyes.

III

WELCOME

With home-returning steps, my anxious heart
Longs ardently to see my dear one's face,
To read her starry eyes, and fondly trace
Each subtle sign of change; with loving art
To bridge the time that we have been apart,
To hold her closely in a long embrace,
And in her soft caressing hand to place
Some true-love token, from a foreign mart.
Alas, no earthly token reaches her!
I open wide my arms, she cannot come.
Perchance she knows the tumult and the stir
Of my great grief; for she is gone before
To make the skies seem dear, and when once more
She welcomes me, I too shall be at home.

IV

SELF-FORGETFULNESS

Oh, that I once could cast away this load
Of selfish grief! could check each rising tear,
Crush back each sigh, and quell each coward fear;
Then could my soul run the celestial road
Which leads me onward to the blest abode
Of that bright spirit who to me is dear,
The same, yet changed, from what she was when here,
For on her now new glory is bestowed.
For if I love her, then I should be glad
And in her joy rejoice, nor selfish thought
Find any place; my tears but make her sad,
And show some great and sudden change in me,
Who shared each joy, with truest sympathy.
If she is blessed, my sorrow then is naught.

V

RECURRENCE

Upborne by Aspiration and by Hope,
Some ease I find, from all my heavy grief,
Some rays of comfort come to my relief,
And in the darkness I no longer grope.
It is as if a door of heaven did ope,
And unto me streamed out its blessed light,
That comforted and cheered my longing sight,
As I reposed on Beulah's mountain slope.
And then, my grief comes surging back again,
And all is dark around, and far above.
I want her here, her loss is bitter pain,
And while the burning tears my sad eyes drench,
I know once more that there is naught can quench
Immortal sorrow but immortal love.

VI

LOVE AND SORROW

Sorrow and Love, those twins of heavenly birth,
Move hand in hand, upborne on noiseless wing,
And unto all their precious gifts they bring.
Love pours his forth, surpassing mortal worth,
All things that gladden, and make bright the earth:
Pure thought, high aims, and inspiration's might,
And to these nobler blessings adds delight,
And lovely flowers of joy, and youthful mirth.
Then follows sorrow, with her upward gaze,
And treads the paths where only Love was guide,
And lives again, through all the by-gone days,
Recalls each hour, but with a subtle change,
With added grace of meaning, new and strange,
Till all the happy past is glorified.

VII

VISION

Oh that some holy prophet, as of old,
Would ask the Lord for me that I might see!
For when one looked around so fearfully,
Elisha prayed, and then he saw! Behold
The mountain full of chariots of gold,
And fiery steeds of heavenly cavalry
Arrayed to fight for Israel gloriously,—
A mighty host, whose numbers were untold.
E'en here while living in the flesh there come
Some blessed rays to satisfy Faith's sight;
Some radiance from the everlasting home
Streams down to earth, from out the open door,
Along the path of those gone on before,
From that pure world where God Himself gives light.

VIII

LIFE

GREAT God, Thou perfect fount of Love and Light,
Thou Whom it is eternal life to know,
In Whom we only live, as we do grow,
Shine on my darkness, and illume my night.
Omnipotent, put forth Thy wondrous might,
And make the strong tides of Thy spirit flow
And course through mine till everything below
Is vanished and I rise to heavenly height.
For that which we call death, is but a door,
Through which the spirit passes, unto Thee.
How blest, then, is that life which evermore
Dwells in Thy light, forever drawing near
To Thine Infinity, without a fear
To walk with Thee, through all eternity!

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